Paediatricians to the Commission. However, a demand was widely made before the Pay Commission to increase the period of maternity leave for 90 days to 180 days. The Fifth Central Pay Commission, however, recommended enhancement of period of maternity leave from 90 days to 135 days only which has been accepted by the Government.

The Pay Commission recommended introduction of a voluntary system of option for serving women employees to work half time for a maximum of six years in a career when the children are young and family commitments are at the maximum. However, the suggestion for allowing women employees to work half day with half pay and allowances had already been considered earlier and not found acceptable for various reasons.

Encouraging the growth of software industry

*214. SHRI PREM CHAND GUPTA: Will the Minister of INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the software industry has been one of the fastest growing industries in the electronic sector;

(b) whether the export of software has recorded a growth of forty three percent over the Eighth Plan period reaching $1042 million in 1996-97 and $1749 million in 1997-98;

(c) whether during the same period, the domestic growth rate was about fifty-two percent touching Rs. 2600 crores by 1996-97 and Rs. 3470 crores in 1997-98; and

(d) what steps Government have taken to encourage this industry and stimulate further growth in view of the phenomenal sustained growth rate in this sector?

THE MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI PRAMOD MAHAJAN): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir.

(d) A statement is enclosed.

Statement

The Government of India has set up the Ministry of Information Technology on 15.10.1999 to facilitate all initiatives in the IT sector including Internet, e-commerce, IT education and IT based education.

The Government has accepted the first report of the National IT Task Force outlining 108 recommendations of the IT Action Plan. These recommendations suggest measures and policies covering a wide spectrum of issues relating to telecommunication, finance, banking, revenue, commerce, electronics, HRD, defence and rural development to enable India to emerge as an Information Technology super power within the next ten years. A target of software export of US$50 billion by the year 2008 has been set. The Task Force has also recommended a goal of ""IT for All" by 2008 in India. The second and third report of the Task Force address the issues and strategy for development of hardware industry, R&D in the area of IT, manpower training and education.

All Government Departments are required to spend 2-3% of their budget towards implementation of IT. To induce more investment in R&D in computers, a weighted deduction of 125% on the sums paid to any university, college or institution or a scientific research association for the purpose of scientific, social or statistical research has been provided.

Many States of India have drawn up comprehensive IT plans and have come out with IT policies which will help in creating a conducive environment for high growth of high-tech industries.

Government of India has also formed a Rs. 100 crores National Venture Capital Fund in association with the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), Industrial Development Bank of India (IDBI) for the IT industry particularly for small and medium enterprises.

Penetration of Personnel Computers (PC) in the country at present is slightly more than 3 per 1000 persons. The target is to increase the PC penetration to 20 per 1000 person by the year 2008. To push the demand of PCs in the country, depreciation on computers has been increased to 60%.

Government has implemented Internet Service providers (ISPs) Policy, ISPs are allowed to set up International Gateways and hire bandwidth on foreign satellites. Public and private sectors have been licensed to provide internet services in the country. No licence fee is payable for first five years and a nominal fee of one rupee is to be paid after five years. The internet policy approved by Governments provides inter-connection of networks and setting up of international gateway by the internet service provider independent of VSNL. The infrastructure for Internet is proposed to be

upgraded as below:

(a) Department of Telecom Services (DTS) is setting up national internet backbone in the country.

(b) Internet Service Providers are allowed to set up last mile linkages freely by fibre optic or by radio communication.

(c) The Internet access is also allowed through authorized cable TV.

The tariff for internet access has been recently reduced. DTS have recently offered 20% concession on rental for leased lines taken and used for internet applications. Students are being given one time concession on internet accounts by DTS. Access to internet on local call basis from the nearest internet node has been provided throughout the country except in Andaman and Nicobar Island and Leh (J and K). The existing departmental Public Call Operators (PCO) and Subscriber Trunk Dailing (STD) booths are proposed to be upgraded to public tele-info/cyber centres. These centres will provide multi-utility services such as internet, e-mail access and internet libraries.

To provide the legal framework for transaction on Internet and e-commerce, Information Technology Biil, 1999 was introduced in the last session of the Parliament. Such a legal framework will facilitate and give a fillip to the e-commerce activities in the country.

Cure of Orissa Cyclone Victims

*215. MISS MABEL REBELLO:
SHRI SURESH KALMADI:

Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the plans Government propose to initiate to attend the serious problems due to recent super cyclone in Orissa which has resulted in large number of orphans, similarly large number of people suffered mental and psychological trauma and thus resulted in neurological disorder; and

(b) whether Government have earmarked any provision in the budget in this regard; if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE (SHRI SUNDER LAL PATWA): (a) The Government of Orissa has taken some initiatives for the orphaned children by providing shelter, orphanages, medicine, etc. as also for women who have been widowed. The Department of Women and Child Development has sanctioned 31 Short Stay Homes for women and children. The Team deputed by them to Orissa suggested ensuring proper nutrition and health cover for